
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Capitol Hill Historic District	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	117 C Street, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Meeting Date:	December 15, 2011	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	11-479	<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Amanda Molson	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

Owners Jack and Stephanie Lester, with plans prepared by Jennifer Fowler, AIA, request concept approval for a rear addition and two-story garage at 117 C Street, SE in the Capitol Hill Historic District.

Property Description

Located across the street from the Library of Congress's Madison Building, the construction of 117 C Street, SE pre-dates building permits. This three-story residence features such Italianate detailing as a bracketed wood cornice and door surround and elongated windows on the first floor of the front elevation. The grade of the backyard accommodates a walk-out, aboveground basement, on top of which sits a two-story rear ell that drops down to one story at the back of the house. The rear yard of the subject property opens towards the back wall of a tall apartment building that fronts onto D Street, with the remainder of the alley occupied by inhabited alley dwellings, two-story carriage houses, and one-story garages.

Proposal

The applicants propose to construct two additional bedrooms by adding one room each to the rear of the second and third stories. The second floor addition would be placed directly atop the deepest portion of the existing rear ell, with the third floor addition placed atop the shallower portion of the rear ell in order to provide a rear setback.

At the back of the property, the applicants wish to construct a two-story accessory structure that provides parking space and storage on the ground floor, with living space on the second floor. Because of grade changes in the rear yard, the yard-facing elevation of the garage would be 15' in height, while the alley-facing elevation would be 18'-6" (roughly equivalent to the cornice height of the two-story garage next door at 115 C, which features a taller side gable roof). A garden trellis would extend along the east side of the yard to connect the main house to the new garage structure.

Evaluation

The proposed addition increases the size of what is already a fairly large house by only two rooms and maintains the existing rear plane of the house without a change in footprint. Continuing the brick material of the existing house and repeating the pattern of 6-over-6 double-

hung windows, the new addition would be simple in its design and compatible with the character of the historic house.

In recent years, the Board has begun to establish precedent for the approval of new, two-story garages on Capitol Hill (where these structures are appropriate at all). Though not always, most new two-story garages on Capitol Hill have been proposed in alleys that have an established historic context of two-story accessory buildings, such that the new structure sits comfortably in its surroundings and is not an anomaly in the alleyscape. In this case, the rear alley includes the historic alley dwellings of Rumsey Court, three two-story carriage houses (including one next door at 115 C), and numerous one-story garages (including one next door at 119 C).

The Board has generally required that the height and design of two-story garages be in keeping with the modest nature of the neighborhood's historic accessory structures. The proposed garage takes its design cues from Capitol Hill's early carriage houses by mirroring their typical height and utilizing masonry construction, double-hung windows, and simple detailing over the windows and doors. The height is mitigated on the yard-facing side by a grade change that allows the inward-facing elevation most visible to abutting neighbors to be several feet shorter than the alley-facing elevation. The impact on the historic alley dwellings of Rumsey Court is softened by their location due east of the garage and by the 30' wide public alley. The proposed garage is compatible with the character of the historic house and with the Capitol Hill Historic District in massing, materials, fenestration, and overall design.

The L'Enfant Trust holds a preservation easement on this property, and the applicants have already secured the written approval of their easement holder for this project.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Board approve the concept as consistent with the purposes of the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.